



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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County's Efforts to Thwart West Nile Virus Successful *Aerial larvicide applications effective in minimizing virus in San Diego County*

With colder weather bringing an end to mosquito breeding season, County Vector Control officials have determined that San Diego County fared far better this year than most other Southern California counties in dealing with the West Nile virus.

"I am happy to report that our aggressive monthly aerial attacks on 27 mosquito-breeding sites, from May through October, has had a significant effect on slowing the spread of West Nile virus in the County," said Gary Erbeck, director of the County Department of Environmental Health. "Typically the virus is the most severe in the second year, but San Diego County experienced far less dramatic impacts than other Southern California Counties."

San Diego County only reported two human cases, however, one was acquired in Long Beach, and officials were unable to determine exactly where the other person contracted the virus. As a comparison, Orange County reported 66 human cases; San Bernardino County had 110 illnesses, Riverside had 191, and Los Angeles County had a total of 322 human cases.

Since West Nile virus is primarily a bird disease, reducing the number of mosquitoes that can transmit the virus to birds helped dramatically to curb the spread of the virus this year. Mosquito traps set at the aerial treatment sites revealed a 90% reduction of the mosquito population through the aerial application of larvicides.

In November, only one dead bird tested positive for the virus. San Diego County Vector Control tested 332 dead birds with 34 positive this year, while 3,206 dead birds tested positive statewide. Additionally, 536 horses were diagnosed positive for the virus in California, while San Diego County had only two positive horses.

Vector Control still urges the public to remain vigilant and eliminate backyard-breeding sources. During a warm spell, mosquitoes can reproduce in as little as one week. The proactive prevention strategy of monthly treatments will resume in the spring when the weather begins to warm up and mosquitoes are active again.

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